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UAA Mat-Su Home of the Mat-Su College Arctic Dragons

Mat-Su Monitor

SUMMER 2020 VOLUME 43 NUMBER 6

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP SOON!
WE WANT YOU TO RUN FOR OFFICE OF 2020
Mat-Su College
University of Alaska Anchorage

Calling All Student Leaders!

By Angeli Kristovich

Ever since the outbreak of Covid-19, a lot has changed, and the same rings true with the goings on in student government. We, the student government, were supposed to hold elections for the offices of President and Vice President in April, but because of Covid, it's just not going to happen. So, we came up with a plan to hold elections in the fall. This is good because it will give students more time over the summer to think about whether they would like to run for said offices.

Are you thinking about running? Curious about what it's like? Well, wonder no more buddy! I'll give you the scoop. First let me tell you the qualifications for office; you must be taking at least three credit hours per semester, and your GPA cannot go below 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. Those are the two set-in-stone qualifications.

> Choosing to be in student government will build on your leadership skills

I was in office for one year and it was super fun! I had never run a real meeting before, so that experience alone was fun, and often so ridiculous that it was funny. Sitting alongside the VP, Shane O'Quinn, was the best. We made a really good team because we are both positive people. Throughout the semesters we both went through tough times, and fun times, and whined about homework, but we made it through, always with a smile on our faces. So, if you choose to be in office, you will make really great friends.

You get to work alongside staff and faculty, and they show you how things work within the college. For example, when the student government chooses to host an event, hand out swag, or give away food, there are proper channels to navigate to do so, and the staff and faculty show you how to make it happen until you can do it on your own.

See **ELECTIONS** *page 3*

UAA: Here When You Need Us.

By Cathy Sandeen, UAA Chancellor

Many of you have heard me describe UAA as Alaska's modern, relevant, connected urban-metropolitan university. UAA has become the school of choice for Alaska's best and brightest, and we open our doors to anyone seeking opportunity through education. UAA is Anchorage's hometown university. We're here to solve real-world problems. These words cannot fully describe the important asset UAA has become over its history.

Cathy Sandeen, UAA Chancellor

At no time has the value of UAA to this community been more apparent than during our current response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the last fifteen years, UAA biology researchers have been studying coronavirus strains, most recently in bats in Alaska, developing tools that can now be applied to the virus that causes COVID-19. Mutated coronavirus strains jumping from bats to humans are known to be the cause of the SARS outbreak in 2003 and the MERS outbreak in 2012.

Our researchers have partnered with the Centers of Excellence for Influenza Research and Surveillance to standardize, catalog, and make accessible data to everyone around the world, with the hope of painting a clearer picture of regional coronavirus variants.

In addition to this research, the UAA College of Health is working to graduate up to seventy-two nursing students early so that they can join the healthcare workforce in Alaska. The college is coordinating with relevant university offices, the Alaska Board of Nursing, and the accrediting agency.

See **UAA CONTRIBUTIONS** *page 4*

Blue and Oliver. At the end of it all, even after a full day of tormenting each other, they still find a way to forgive one another and love each other

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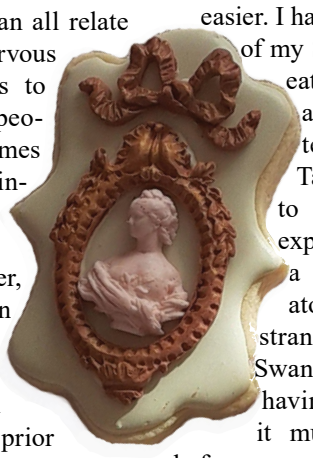
Back in Time with Renaissance Cookie Co.

By Ricque Antolin

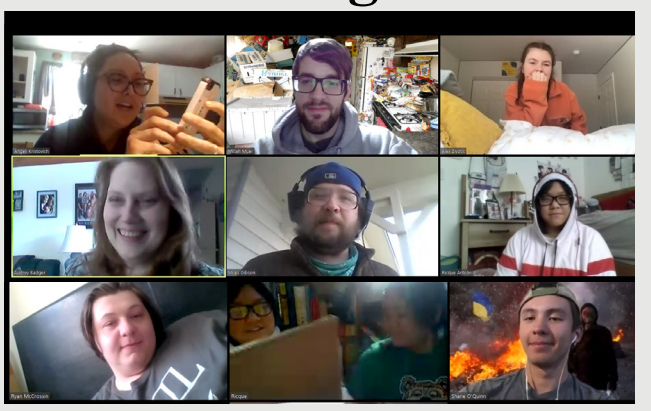
I think we can all relate to being nervous when it comes to meeting new people. When it comes to one-on-one interviews, I myself get a little antsy. However, the person mentioned in this article is someone I had already known prior to the interview, which made the interaction much easier. I had spent a day of my Spring Break eating cookies and drinking tea with Mrs. Talia Swanson to question her experience as a cookie creator. I was no stranger to Mrs. Swanson's home, having visited it multiple times before as a guest. It was



See **COOKIES** *page 8*

Moving your club meetings online

By Brad Storch



On March 12, in the middle of spring break, UA President Johnsen announced a move to online classes and a ban on gatherings of more than 25 people. Within days, the University tightened up those rules and local, state, and federal recommendations and restrictions came into effect. The end result is that most students haven't stepped foot on campus since Spring break started.

This left the *Monitor* in a bind. How would we put out another paper without our weekly meetings? Would people even *want* to do another paper if it had to be coordinated online? Turns out, to the last person, our group wanted to press on. They were willing to contribute articles and to meet online. That's a testament to the quality of the present *Monitor* crew.

See **CLUBS ONLINE** *page 3*

Acing an Online Interview

By Adélina Rodríguéz

In the last couple of months, we have all had to transition into the digital world: taking online classes, ordering groceries online, visiting friends and family through video chat, and to those applying for jobs, scoring an online interview! An interview in itself is nerve wrecking but adding technology can potentially increase your level of stress and anxiety. With any interview, whether it is in person or online, preparing can ultimately set you apart from others, boost your confidence, and allow you to focus on your responses.

In response to COVID-19, more employers are moving to conducting online interviews; therefore, job seekers should expect their next interview to be online. So, how should you prepare?

Tip #1 Technology

First, you will need to have access to a video camera and microphone, which are often built-in features on most laptops or smartphones. If you plan to use a smartphone, be sure to have a phone stand so you can secure it. This will allow you to be hands-free and keep you from moving the phone during the interview. Second, familiarize yourself with the video conferencing software the employer will be using for the interview. Some popular web conferencing tools are Skype, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Be sure to login (by creating an account if necessary) or download the app. The employer should provide you with guidance on what you will need. If not, reach out to them and ask. Do not leave this to the evening before the interview or minutes before. You should complete this a couple of days before the interview in addition to running an audio and video test.

Tip #2 Prepare

Prepare your interview space. Yes, you are inviting your future employer into your space, whether it is an office, kitchen or family room. Therefore, prepare the space that is behind you. Avoid having a window behind you for two reasons. First, if someone or a pet is in the background, this will be distracting for the employer. Secondly, unless you have curtains, the light from the window makes it difficult for the employer to see you. Therefore, I would recommend having a wall behind you and lighting from either in front or above you.

Once you identify your interviewing space, prepare your family or roommates. As we practice social distancing, we find ourselves amongst our family and roommates continuously and a quiet space is harder to find. Let them know when you are interviewing and remind them that you will not be available during this time. It would be best to be behind a closed door for the interview to lessen interruptions. Also, this is a good time to remind you to turn off notifications on your cell phone to eliminate distractions.

Prepare to *dress professionally*. Yes, it is true that the interviewer can only see what you are wearing on top. However, you need to be certain that you do not have to get up and grab a pen because you just ran out of ink. Treat an online interview as you would an in-person interview, again, being prepared will make the difference in your online presence and will allow you to focus on your responses.

As with an in-person interview, have a copy of your resume with you. You do not want to try navigating your computer system and accidently end the video call. Be prepared to reference your resume, should they ask you to clarify any of your previous experience. Finally, have paper and pen to take notes and be prepared with questions about the position.

Tip #3 Practice

Practice your online interview. Body language is as important in an online interview as it is in an in-person interview. Make sure to smile, sit-up straight, and look into the camera. The Mat-Su College Career Development office is prepared to conduct a mock online interview if you are interested in practicing and receiving feedback to improve your interviewing skills. To schedule a mock-interview contact the Career Development Advisor, Adélina Rodríguéz, by email at arodriguez22@alaska.edu.

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For more information contact:
907.745.9746
UA is an AA/EO employer and educational institution and prohibits illegal discrimination against any individual.

Introducing Handshake!

The new recruitment platform for employment opportunities.

By Adélina Rodríguéz

It should come as no surprise that career networking and employer recruitment strategies have moved to an online platform, more so now with the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Mat-Su College (MSC) Career Development Advisor, I wanted to make sure that students and alumni had access to resources and tools that would give them a competitive advantage, when it came to identifying internships and employment opportunities. The wait is over. I am excited to introduce Handshake!

Handshake is free to MSC students and alumni and will connect you to over 500K employers, including 100% of the Fortune 500 Companies, access career tips, and employment events. You will also get personalized job and internship recommendations based on your interests. In addition, you can receive assistance with your resume, cover letter, and schedule a mock interview, by contacting your MSC Career Development Advisor directly, in the Career Center, within Handshake.

Access your Handshake account today!

Step 1: Login with your UA credentials at **alaska.joinhandshake.com**

Step 2: Start building your profile. It's your time to shine, so don't be shy about listing your accomplishments.

Step 3: Set your preferences for the types of jobs and locations you're interested in.

Follow these three easy steps to get started and you will be one-step closer to finding your next opportunity! Need assistance, contact Mat-Su College Career Development Office at 907.746-9319.

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The *Mat-Su Monitor* is the student newspaper of Mat-Su College. The *Monitor* aims to report college news and serve as a forum for student writing. The *Monitor* seeks submissions of news, editorials, and short fiction from all students, staff, and faculty of Mat-Su College. All students are invited to attend the *Monitor*'s weekly meetings. Details on participating in or submitting content to the *Monitor* can be found at *https://matsu.alaska.edu/offices/student-government/student-clubs/mat-su-monitor.cshtml.*

The Mat-Su Monitor is funded by the Mat-Su College Student Government Association and our advertisers. For information on advertising in the *Monitor* contact Micah Muer at mwmuer@alaska.edu or 907-745-9758.

The opinions expressed the *Monitor* article are solely those of its authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of the college, its students and employees, or the wider University of Alaska system.

Elections *continued from page 1*

When students ask for changes to happen on campus, Student Government discusses the proposed changes and work towards making that happen, and if you have a good group of people in the council, it can be a really fun experience along the way. Choosing to be in student government will build on your leadership skills, make you a better public speaker, introduce to all of the awesome staff and faculty, teach you to host big events, and how to budget money.

Also, every March, the leaders of the student government get to go to Juneau to talk to the legislators to fight for funding for the University funds. Well, maybe fight is the wrong word, more like advocate and tell them what education means to us. We did not get to go this year because of Covid-19, but we almost did! And even almost going was pretty cool in itself.

Okay, I saved the coolest part of being in office for those who read this till the end. At the end of each semester, the President and VP are awarded a service award of up to 12 credit hours as voted on by the council, if they believe that you worked for it. So, your classes can be paid for!

Being in Office was the best decision that I made while I was in college. I am a full-time student and was able to keep my GPA at a 3.75 while I was in office, so it's doable. I think for anyone even considering being in office, you should email me, and we can talk about it. I assure you that you will have so much fun! Also, I will help you get started and teach you what I know as well, so there's really nothing to worry about. Unless you're worried about having a really awesome time and becoming a cooler version of yourself! Email me at amkristovich@alaska.edu

The Monitor Thanks…

The 2019-2020 *Mat-Su Monitor* crew had lots of help from family and friends. In addition, many helpful people on campus and in the community lightened our load. Here is an incomplete, unordered list of people we'd like to thank:

Maggie Boman for quickly and kindly handling our paperwork.

Mat-Su College Student Government council for its support.

Shira Crowell for confirming our room reservations.

Pete Praetorius, former *Monitor* advisor, for continued support and advice and for talking us up to his students.

Paul Younack, the campus's night janitor, for sharing ideas and catching more than a few typos.

Petra Albecker and Ryan Sleight at the Frontiersman for always being kind and patient as we struggle to meet deadlines.

Scott Taylor for handling our web presence.

Our advertisers -- please check them all out! They've been a joy to work with and have supported us for many years.

Every student who submitted a serious, non-vulgar *Ask Sophia* question, as well as those students who took part in our contests or in our Word on the Street series.

The Mat-Su Monitor Asks: "What was it like doing all your classes online?"

- I have never taken an online class before so it was super difficult to get used to. I think it was frustrating for everyone involved but we got it figured out pretty good. I think the hardest part about being in an online class, for me, is not letting myself get trapped into googling every thought that comes across my mind. Like, seriously. Every single thought needs to be investigated and after a while it just gets ridiculous. See, I happen to know this about myself which is why I chose to take in-person classes to begin with. It's like now, for instance. My homework was getting difficult so I decided to take a break from it and write a little blurb for the paper. I'll get it figured out though.

- I've originally signed up for 3 online and 3 in-person classes. The classes in person that switched to online ended up working out, but I would have recoiled at the thought about taking six classes online in a semester. In a way, I am happy that this has worked for me, but hopefully by the fall there will be at the very least a limited amount of classes in a classroom.

- I've had experiences with online classes prior to the change but somehow this transition was more difficult to get used to. It was kind of abrupt and the transition hadn't hit me until I found one failed assignment and one missing worksheet. To shed some light on the subject, one of my professors made the transition easy, making me feel like I was still in the classroom. It was definitely different considering the circumstances but what's life without experiencing new things?

You can contact the your student government at:
Online: https://matsu.alaska.edu/offices/student-government/
Email: uaa_mscstudentgov@alaska.edu
Phone: (907)-745-9759
Office: JKB 114 (hours vary)

Clubs Online *continued from page 1*

But we should also point out that the university has a lot of tools that clubs can use to meet and work online. In particular, we decided to use Zoom to do live meetings. Live meetings were the one piece of the puzzle we were missing (we've long had file sharing, planning, etc., online). Zoom has the advantages of being pretty simple to use and pretty familiar now that many classes are using it.

Students can easily set up free Zoom meetings using their University of Alaska credentials. Just follow these steps:

- In your web browser, go to https://alaska.zoom.us
- Click "Sign in."
- Use the "Schedule a new meeting" button to set up a meeting. After putting in a date and time and other optional details and clicking submit, you'll get a link that you can share with the people you want to attend. (But be careful not to share with strangers.)

That's really all there is to it. People just need to click the link at the time of the meeting; everything after that is pretty self-explanatory.

So this solves the technical of hurdle of *how* to meet. The bigger problems you'll need to solve are on the human side of things. Starting a club is easy enough -- you just need someone to get signatures on some paperwork, and no doubt Student Government can help you. (Here is a good place to say Student Government has also been using Zoom to conduct its business.) The real challenge is going to be recruiting people to your club. We don't have any ready-made answers for that, but we can tell you that the *Monitor* is ready to help you publicize any club you might form or want to form. Just let us know about it by emailing uaa_mscmonitor@alaska.edu.

PRIVACY POSTSCRIPT:

We recognize that some people have reasonable concerns about the security of the Zoom software and the privacy policies of the company behind it. If you fancy a "fully encrypted, 100% open source video conferencing solution," try https://meet.jit.si/. There you can set up a video chat for multiple people without registering and without any software beyond your web browser (although you can also get mobile apps if you need them).

7 Digital Privacy Tips

By Betty Symington

Now that you're spending more time online than ever, it's important to follow good digital privacy practices. Here are tools you can use to keep your personal information out of the hands of the big advertising corporations.

1. Don't sign up for websites -- use BugMeNot. Imagine a site asks you to login to read an article. You'll have to hand over at least your email address, if not more, just to create an account you'll never use again. Don't bother! Check bugmenot.com. bugmenot.com lists logins for thousands of websites. Maybe somebody already made an account for the site. Then, since it is was of no further use to them, maybe they posted it to bugmenot.com.

2. If you do sign up for a website, use a fake email address. You shouldn't give out your personal email address to just anyone. That's how you end up with 10,000 unread emails in your inbox. It's also how big advertising firms track you -- they buy user lists from sites and draw connections. You have at least two options to use "fake" email addresses. First, you can register a bunch of free email accounts and use them. That's the safest approach since all those accounts are accessible only to you. But often it's simpler to use a disposable email account from a site like guerrillamail.com. No registration's needed, but anyone who knows the address can access the inbox (although mail is only stored for one hour).

3. If you are really going to use a website, read about it on Terms of Service; Didn't Read. Terms of Service; Didn't Read (tosdr.org) has bullet-point summaries of the pages of legalese that most sites make you agree to. You might think twice about signing up for a site when you understand what rights you're giving up.

4. Use a password manager. Whether you're using real or fake email addresses, you'll want a strong, unique password. Strong so that it can't be guessed (and bear in mind that computers can make billions of guesses per second). Unique so that if it *is* guessed or leaked, your other accounts remain safe. But these rules make it hard to remember even one password, let alone the dozens you'll need. This is where password managers -- programs made to store our passwords -- come into play. Options about, but KeePassXC (https://www.keepassxc.org) is a free, open source password manager that's a good one to try first. If you need help getting started, read this guide from the Electronic Frontier Foundation (https://ssd.eff.org/en/module/how-use-keepassxc).

5. Use Firefox over Google Chrome. There's a saying online: "if you're not paying, you're the product." So it is with Google, whose massive income comes from advertising revenue. They give away many fine services (YouTube, Gmail, search, Android, and Chrome) these services collect data on you. This data is then combined into one gigantic, detailed profile. This enables Google to serve you the ads you're most likely to click. Chrome plays an especially pernicious role in tracking. Its users interact with Google every time they visit a site, whether Google owns that site or not. In contrast, the Firefox browser is made by a non-profit whose aim is to "keep the internet open and accessible to all."

7. Use BleachBit to remove your internet history from your computer. BleachBit (https://www.bleachbit.org) is free, open source software. BleachBit can delete the history of all your browsers, remove logs created by any one of hundreds of programs, and generally tidy up your computer. Deleting your browsing history won't stop your internet service provider from knowing where you've gone. It will prevent sites from looking at cookies stored on your computer to know what other sites you visit. Bleachbit is safe to use, although by clearing your history you may have to login to sites again.

Mat-Su Monitor
Summer 2020

Meet Deidre Berberich Assoc. Professor of Accounting

By Angeli Kristovich

Today's faculty spotlight is shining bright on Deidre Berberich. Her official job title is Associate Professor of Accounting and she is the Business Department Coordinator. She has been my accounting professor for two semesters. She goes above and beyond for students, and I know this first hand because I am a needy student. Luckily, she offers tutoring twice a week and office hours Monday through Thursday for those of us who need it. Her availability leaves little room for students to say that they weren't given the resources to succeed in her classes.

Deidre (right) and her daughter.

Before coming to college, I would talk with friends and debate on what we should go to college for. There have been a couple times where I've heard, "I think I'll go for accounting because it's easy," or, "I'm good with numbers, so I'll go for accounting." I had no rebuttal when I heard that because at the time, I didn't know anything about accounting, so I just agreed, then ignorantly believed. So, I came to college with that belief of thinking accounting is easy. However, my first semester in accounting 101, let me just say that it was not what I was expecting at all. Yes, there are numbers involved, sure. But the numbers aren't the issue that gets people tripped up. It's the accounts that the numbers are going into and coming out of that make your world fall apart.

Deirdre explained (more like warned) at the beginning of the semester in Acct 101 to forget what we are used-to when we think of debits and credits, as it is nothing like our bank accounts. We had to rewire our brains to a whole new concept of debiting and crediting, and for a stubborn person like myself, it was painful. But like I said, Deidre makes herself extremely available with tutoring, and you can call her, and she is very responsive with email.

She has been working at Mat-Su College full time since August 2011, and before that she was an adjunct teacher since 1988. She currently teaches; Principles of Accounting 101 and 102, Managerial Accounting, Payroll, Workpaper Prep and Presentation, Financial Accounting, Intermediate Accounting, Intermediate Account 2, and Cost Accounting 342. And here I am over here complaining about how much homework *I* have to do? She is such a hard worker!

When Covid-19 reared its ugly face in Alaska, UAA made a swift move to online education. All of my classes made a fairly seamless transition to distance education. The first day of Accounting 102 some people, like myself, had internet issues. And some had issues with learning how to connect to Zoom (the online classroom app). Amazingly, by the second week everyone got it figured out and Deidre was there patient like she always is and ready to answer questions and explain to us how we will be moving forward.

The Covid virus is unpredictable and scary. At a time of uncertainty, it has meant a lot that my classes and professors have continued with the same professionalism and integrity by showing the same care and attention to detail to student needs as they always have, when it is a time when everything else feels chaotic. Deidre has done an excellent job with the new transition to the online classwork and all of her students applaud her for her patience and optimism that keeps us feeling good about "coming to class." Way to go Deidre! And way to go to the staff and faculty in the University of Alaska System! We are going to make it through this! The UAA Stands Together. (Six feet apart, of course.)

Meet Taylor Henry, Academic Advisor

By Kate Stavick

Taylor Henry

It is always exciting to get a new job. Whether it's a fresh start somewhere new, an increase in pay and responsibilities, or a second act, a new job can be a great thing. It's also a time to meet new people, widen your circle of friends and contacts, or just change everything up. I know it was all those things when I began my new job at Mat-Su College.

Student Services recently added a new Academic Adviser, Taylor Henry, to our department. She has the unique luck of joining Student Services just days before the campus shut down because of COVID-19. And while her introduction to our college is physically not possible at this time, she is still excited to join.

Originally from Iowa, Taylor was a first-generation college student, first attending Simpson College, and earning her bachelor's degree in Psychology, and later moving to Minnesota where she earned her master's degree in Educational Leadership. Being a first-generation college student herself, Taylor understands just how intimidating the college experience can be, from navigating courses and student loans to facing challenging classes and just asking for help.

"It was extremely helpful to find the faculty and staff members I felt comfortable talking with when I was faced with a challenge," Taylor says.

Facing these challenges makes Taylor uniquely qualified to be our newest Academic Adviser. She brings with her a great deal of experience working within higher education institutions and understands just how vital advisers are to a successful college career.

"My advisers were the professional coaches I needed to succeed through the college journey. It's my time to be the professional coach many students need during one of the most important times of their lives, " Taylor says of her time with her own college advisers.

Navigating her own journey has helped prepare Taylor for the unique challenge of beginning a new job in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Literally the week she started, the campus was nearly empty, except for a few who were getting everything set for operating from home, after the college had extended spring break while planning out what the rest of the term would look like. Not all of the staff within Student Services had the opportunity to meet Taylor before we went into "hunker down" mode, and she hasn't been able to learn about our campus, faculty and staff in the traditional way, but with help of technology, along with the support of Student Services, Taylor has been able to interact her coworkers.

But it's not all work and no play for Taylor. Her desire to live in Alaska led her to make an over 3000-mile drive up to this great state. She also enjoys going to the movies, spending time with friends and family, hiking, organizing, yoga, puzzles, playing guitar, podcasts, running, and trying out new restaurants.

Taylor offers some advice to students experiencing times of doubt: "If you start to doubt yourself and your potential, say 'You can do this!' three times in the mirror. You'll feel silly, but it works!" Actually, this works for anyone going through doubt about anything. And she's right, you feel silly, but it is a terrific exercise to try, from a great new addition to the Mat-Su College staff!

UAA Contributions *from page 1*

These students are completing their course requirements on an expedited timeline and will apply for temporary licensure that qualifies them to practice for six months. They will follow up with completion of the licensing exam that all nursing students take to become a permanent RN.

The college's Alaska Center for Rural Health and Health Workforce is working with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services COVID-19 Task Force to quickly develop a medical supply survey tool to track supply usage and restock rates used by the state to prioritize and distribute critical medical supplies.

Additionally, a research team from the UAA College of Health's Division of Population Health Sciences and Institute for Circumpolar Studies used epidemiological modeling to predict the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations in the Anchorage and Mat-Su area. The report found without recent state and municipal intervention policies aimed at sheltering in place and social distancing, Alaska's medical infrastructure would become overwhelmed.

The report, which was shared with Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, Governor Mike Dunleavy, and Alaska Chief Medical Officer Anne Zink, called for strengthening these intervention measures to "flatten the curve." The researchers have now done similar modeling for the Fairbanks area.

UAA's contributions also extend beyond the College of Health. An economist within the UAA Institute for Economic and Social Research and the College of Business and Public Policy has conducted analysis on the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Alaska's economy. A faculty member with expertise in international policy and disaster response is actively contributing to local planning efforts.

UAA engineering faculty have responded to requests by medical professionals to produce ventilator parts and personal protective equipment (PPE) using 3D printing technology available on campus. Another faculty member is adapting orthopedic surgical suits for use in screening COVID-19 patients.

The federally funded Small Business Development Center within the Business Enterprise Institute at UAA has consulted with over 200 small businesses in the state on strategies to mitigate financial losses due to business closures.

In addition, the institute's Manufacturing Extension Partnership worked with the Alaska Legislature on an amendment to SB241. The bill extends the governor's declaration of a public health disaster emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and allows for temporary changes to state law. The amendment provides a liability waiver, making it possible for local manufacturers to produce badly needed PPE Soand allowing local healthcare providers to use it.

The UAA colleges of Health, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering transferred supplies of personal protective equipment to the state for distribution to healthcare workers. UAA research labs have transferred needed chemical supplies to Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium for use in COVID-19 testing.

UAA's Alaska Airlines Center has been converted into a medical alternate care site to treat patients in the event local hospitals experience an influx of COVID-19 patients. UAA is making space available in two of its residence halls to house healthcare workers if the need arises. The university's dining services is also standing by to provide support to healthcare workers. Similar responses have occurred at UAA's community campuses.

We've produced a video series called "Ask a UAA Expert" featuring just-in-time relevant information from faculty with expertise relevant to our COVID-19 response—everything from disaster recovery to talking with your kids about the pandemic to dangers the pandemic poses to rural Alaska Native communities.

This work and more commenced immediately as part of Alaska's COVID-19 response without anyone having to ask. That's what being a relevant, connected university means. UAA is not the ivory tower. I have always said UAA excels at applied research that solves Alaska's most pressing problems. It is no surprise to me that UAA has stepped up magnificently in this current crisis. This is your hometown university. UAA is right here wherever, whenever you might need us.

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LGBTQA+ Acceptance

By Angeli Kristovich

I was trying to think of things to write about and I came across a list of Monitor article ideas. ''LGBTQA+ acceptance'' was still on the list, as it has been there for quite some time. Every time I see it, I think, "why are people still trying to say someone or a group of people are not being accepted?" Now, before I start my article, I will have you all know that my mothers-in-law are gay. So, in my mind I have a right to speak freely because I am not against anyone. However, I am against the idea that people are still trying to make it like being gay is such a big deal. It's not (in Alaska). Why? Because in my opinion, I don't see how anyone has the time or energy to care who someone is in love with. And when I have heard the subject of being gay talked about in conversation with other people, that seems to be the consensus as well with others.

Also, it seems like at times the only people who are making a big deal about being gay are the gay people who are demanding that straight people realize that people are against them. And when I see that I'm like, "who is against these people? I never see them." If I were to guess what they look like I would imagine they would have a chunky red hat on that is not only a red flag to avoid that person, but it would probably say something like, "Make America Straight Again," or something along those lines.

Anyways, the thing is that I don't have the time to worry about what someone else is doing and/or who they are doing it with. And for the people who are in the group that believes they are being frowned upon for whatever reason, I ask you this: Are you really being hated on? Or do you feel like your being hated on because you are lonely? Or was someone rude to you and you took it kind of hard? I'm honestly confused because I haven't witnessed anyone being mean to a gay person. What I have noticed is two people argue, or slightly disagree about something and the gay person says, "its because I'm gay" after the argument/disagreement. There are also times when someone calls something "gay" when they really mean "lame," and a gay person gets offended. I am guilty of that.

That's one thing that kinda has me miffed, though. I grew up watching South Park and hanging out at the skate park. And if you know anything about that show and hanging out at the skate park is that when you say something is "gay" it has nothing to do with homosexuality. It is just a softer way of saying something is stupid or lame, and it's usually said to a friend. But again, that is my opinion.

Not everyone is going to like what you are in to and the world will never be perfect, and that's okay! The way I see it is, I have noticed that in life sometimes you meet people and there just isn't that friendship spark. The way they look at me, or just hearing their voice offends me, and often I don't even know why. But I am able to realize that those people just aren't meant to be in my life, and that's totally okay. That doesn't mean that I am going to be mean or rude to them. After I have made multiple attempts to befriend them and it just doesn't work, I just avoid them. Then, the times I do have a friendship connection it turns out to be a really good one and I'm thankful for that.

All I'm saying is that from my standpoint, I don't see hate crimes that are pointed toward homosexuality in Alaska. Maybe in high school I heard of some things like that because kids were confused and full of teen angst, but not as an adult. I am sure that some people have gone through one or some terrible experiences for being gay and that's sucks, but I also think it made them stronger. I also think that some straight people take it too far when they are confronted with the idea of homosexuality because it's simply too much to comprehend, and they react

See LGBTQA+ page 11

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Jodi Sweeney

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Computer Systems Technology

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Nathaniel Henney

Gregory Naatz

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Gregory Lytle

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Tyler Belk

Molly Etters

Colton Fankhauser

Holly Garcia

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Commercial refrigeration systems

Christian Hietala

Office foundations

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Maddysen Meeks
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Mat-Su Monitor
Summer 2020

To Eat, or Not to Eat? That is the Question

By Angeli Kristovich

You think you can live without stuff like chips, milk, and fresh veggies until you don't have any. On March 12, 2020 the Governor said that Alaska had its first case of Covid-19 and explained the importance of "hunkering down." Since a lot of people in my family are older, it was a no brainer for my husband and I to get groceries and things we'd need to stay home as much as possible while this virus runs its course, without us adding into the chaos of people getting sick, just because we can't stay home for a little while.

So that's what we did. We purchased about 2 months of food, the majority of it being canned goods. It started out with us saying, "we gotta make it last!" then it switched to, "oh well, if this is the end of the world we might as well be eating good." That was obviously our excuse to eat all the good stuff before we had to rely on canned goods. And the excuse to eat the good/perishable stuff was justifiable because the canned goods last longer. Anyways, as of yesterday we hadn't left the house for 3 weeks.

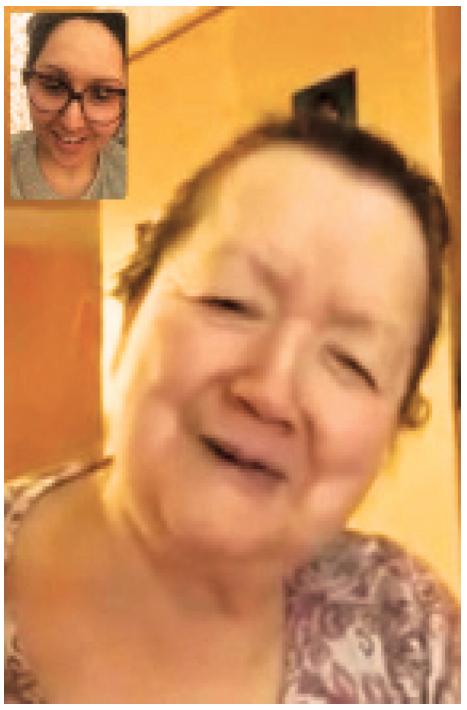
Yesterday we started reminiscing about our favorite stuff. He really wanted a soda, and I really wanted some spinach and milk (not together, of course). We ran out of that stuff one week in. So, around 8 pm I suited up in a mask and turned up my water heater for when I got home. My plan was to be able to get out of my clothes right when I walked through the door and throw them in the wash to be scalded and sanitized. The trip to Fred Meyer was interesting. Mainly because of how many people were not wearing a mask. I was thinking, "do they not care, or maybe they don't think this is that serious?"

But the reality is, is that there is no way that anyone can be completely sheltered from the current news of how fast this virus spreads, and how people are dying every day. So, the fact that I saw people of all ages chillin' in the store like some mall rats without a care in the world just made me sad for those people. If my face wasn't covered by a mask, they would've seen me looking at them with a hardcore mean mug that I couldn't help from having. But really, I was feeling bad for them because I assumed that they hated themselves, or their lives to be out in public without a mask. That was my opinion of them at the time.

Anyways, like I was saying, I chose to go shopping right before closing and I got the essentials: milk, bar soap, Doritos, cheese, fresh veggies, fruits and cleaning supplies. The whole time I was just wanting to get out of there and be in the safe quarters of my home where I can't be part of the reason why someone's grandma or older family member gets sick because of me.

See, what brings the issue of this virus closer to home for me is that my mom lives in an assisted living home. Eight years ago, she slipped and fell in the kitchen (she was wearing crocs and the floor was wet from melted snow) and she hit her head on the corner of the counter. The hard hit to her temple caused a blood clot and then a massive stroke. She was able to recover but she is now half-paralyzed. She also has seizures, so she needs round the clock nursing and doctors care to assist with her current medical challenges.

On March 28 the Denali Center in Fairbanks, where my mom lives, reported that two employees had tested positive for the virus. Then, a couple days later there was a resident who tested positive. Then another, then another. My mind was racing, and I went to a horrible place in my thoughts. A place



Facetime with Mom

where I didn't have my mom anymore. I cried to myself, "My mom is my best friend! I always facetime her and go up and see her during breaks from college! I'm not ready to lose my mommy!" I had to change my thinking and get in touch with her care case manager.

I am lucky to have such a good relationship with the nursing staff that works there. They absolutely love my mother. They always talk about how happy my mom is. If you have ever been in a nursing home you know that some residents aren't too happy to be there. My mom, on the other hand, has always had a positive outlook about different situations. She is aware that she needs the help that she is receiving, so she makes the best of her time. I always ask her if she is happy and she looks at me with a look of absolute certainty and says, "Yes!"

The Denali Center is a good place and I hope that they can stop the virus from spreading throughout the rest of the facility. It is a super unpredictable time with this virus and my story and worry is just one of so many. If people can just go to the store and get what they need, and stay home for a little while to let this virus dissipate that would be so helpful for our health care people, and could even save the life of someone's mother!

Or, if you can't stay home just try really hard to be conscientious about the seriousness of washing your hands, covering your coughs, and all that good stuff, then maybe the spread won't be as bad up here in Alaska.

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Cookies *continued from page 1*

comfortable as I conducted my interview and I had gotten more than I expected. I came into her home with questions I had thought of just to be prepared so I could leave with enough to write an article. I had no idea I would find myself out of questions so quickly, but there were no awkward silences. I found myself enticed by her background on cookies and the cookies themselves. What came to mind were more self-indulgent questions

that I couldn't help but ask about her business. At the end of the interview I confirmed she was, and still is, an amazing woman who make[s] equally amazing cookies

I started the intervie[w] by asking an extremel[y] basic question: "Wha[t] made you [Mr[s]. Swanson] start you[r] business?" to whic[h] she replied, "Well... like making things t[o] eat." After that answer I knew we would get alon[g] just fine. She continued adding that she had started making cookies for charity but as she became recognized, she received baking requests. Her designs began with simple royal icing and delicately made miniature flowers until she discovered modeling chocolate which gave her a bigger variety in decorations for her cookies. I was able to see the process while making a couple cookies myself. It's safe to say I didn't eat all the chocolate, but I'll admit I couldn't help but sneak in a few bites (good thing I wasn't on a diet at the time) but hey! She gave me

Making a "Pie in a window"

permission to, so you can't really blame me. As we made cookies I continued with my questions (I couldn't let the delicious creation I came to write about distract me too much). "How long does each cookie take?" It was dumb of me to expect an answer like 2 hours. "2 days for a concept and 4 days for baking and decorating." I didn't need to look far to see why the cookies took so long. By the end

of the article we should all know that if we were to order one of her cookies the wait would be worth it. Another question I couldn't help but ask was what her favorite design was, to which she explained her framed angels. She also told to me how she comes up with her ideas. In reference to Good Mythical Morning she had quoted their "Will that deep fry?" and related it to herself with a "Can I cookie that?" Her analogy had sparked a genuine laugh out of me due to the fact of being a fan of the Youtube channel myself. Of course, she goes above and beyond with her concepts on cookies, even going as far as to making a "Pie in the window" type piece. In comparison to my simple bouquet of flowers (no, [t]hey weren't wilting, I'm just not [q]uite experienced in the field of [c]ookie decorating) her designs [s]hined bright.

Framed Angels

Having ordered from [h]er before, her cookies [a]re sold at a reasonable [p]rice. The base price [f]or an order of a dozen [c]ookies is $55. For [c]ookies that are hand-[m]ade and homemade with [m]uch thought and care, once you see the results, the fifty-bucks are worth it. Like the name, her cookies are inspired by historical renaissance artists.

Mrs. Swanson has a husband and a family of three daughters whom she loves very much, and I have grown close to them in the years I've known them. Being able to conduct this interview and honorably mention her and give her cookies the recognition they deserve is a blessing on my part as much as it would be on hers if not more. It was undeniably a great time between families as I interviewed her, as my sister, who tagged along, cut her eldest daughter's hair. Laughs filled the room multiple times, making me forget that it was an interview for an article. Mrs. Swanson herself has made sites where you can contact her and order cookies or even ask her questions. You can contact her through her Facebook page "Renaissance Cookie Co" or her Instagram @renaissancecookieco. Being able to interview her reminded me that cookies can bring people together too.

Bang Bang Con 2020: My Concert Experience During Covid-19

By Ricque Antolin

In light of recent events several tours and concerts have been cancelled, disappointing many fans of several music genres. Covid-19 is what you'd probably call one of the worst party crashers in history. However, some artists step up to the plate taking the initiative to host online concerts or, in K-Pop boy group sensation BTS's case, a back to the start live tour starting from their humble beginnings in their Red Bullet Tour all the way to their recently concluded Love Yourself Tour.

Before we delve into my experience of Bang Bang Con here's a little 101 on international music sensation BTS. BTS is a K-pop boy group made up of seven men: Kim Namjoon, Kim Seokjin, Min Yoongi, Jung Hoseok, Park Jimin, Kim Taehyung, Jeon Jungkook. I don't expect you to memorize all of them. It took me a couple months before I could finally say the fan-chant properly. BTS stands for Bangtan Sonyeondan (방탄소년단) which translates to Bulletproof Boy Scouts. The group debuted June 13, 2019 hitting the stage with their title track 'No More Dream'. This was only the bangin' kick-start to their 'School Trilogy' series and the rest of their career.

BangBangCon was a three-day event hosted April 18-19 6pm-9-am (Alaska Time) and it'd be an understatement to say both nights were amazing. Despite ruining my sleep schedule, and possibly falling asleep, missing 3rd Muster the first night and Love Yourself Tour the second, I was able to receive an exciting thrill through the computer screen through the concerts I never got to watch in person. I danced, I sang, and I cried, not necessarily in that order. Between each concert there were twenty-minute intermissions that each group member created, encouraging viewers to stand up and stretch. Along with that were replays of their music videos, perhaps to encourage watching them for more views (stream "ON" by BTS by the way). To the best of my ability I danced to every single one of the intermission songs. Some choreographies I knew by heart so being able to dance along with the boys with what little room I had in my bedroom was a great way to pass the time.

The first night of BangBangCon started off ironically with a bang. They began with the intro to their 2015 Hwa Yang Yun Hwa (화양연화): On Stage Epilogue also known as the HYYH Tour. The songs released during this era called the 'Youth Trilogy' kicked off their careers with award winning songs such as 'I Need U', 'Save Me', and 'Run'. Cue emotional flashback. After the HYYH concert was the time travel back to the group's debut days, their first ever tour: The Red Bullet

See **BANG BANG** *page 11*

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

A much-needed escape from everything. This trip to an island paradise couldn't have come at a better time.

By Arin J. Crowley

If there ever were a time to hop on a plane and escape to a deserted island for a few months, it's right now.

But for most of us, this isn't really an option currently. This reason alone is why so many people have been looking forward to the newest Animal Crossing game. They see it as a viable vacation sim in the face of self-imposed isolation, most places shutting down, and the impending plague we face. I haven't been on campus in almost a month and quite frankly I also miss Target. I miss Target a lot.

The deserted island of Taco Bell is my home now, and I plan on making the most of it.

Take Me Away! A Secret Place! A Sweet Escape!

Animal Crossing: New Horizons begins the same way as the four previous games in the core series: A childlike human finds themself in the middle of the wilderness. Suddenly, a large tanooki appears from the shadows with a proposition. "Come live here!" he says. The child agrees. It seems nice, after all. But suddenly, the child is saddled with the debt of their first house and must sell bugs and fish to settle the debt.

New Horizons doesn't deviate from the core gameplay of Animal Crossing much at all. It's a low-pressure life sim where you're free to fill the days however you like. If you wanted to build yourself a forest wonderland with orchards aplenty you have that option. Maybe you want to create a Zen garden escape with onsens, bamboo, and cherry blossom decorations, go for it pals! Want to spend your days gathering critters and fossils to have the best exhibits, that's also an option.

There's satisfaction in finding a new, rare fish you've never caught before, or saying hi to a neighbor, only to receive

See **ANIMAL CROSSING** *page 11*

Doom Eternal

Rip and tear. Until it is done.

By Arin J. Crowley

If you thought I was going to cover Animal Crossing and NOT cover its release/meme brother you're damn wrong. Doom Slayer and Isabelle are the true dynamic duo we need in these trying times.

Plus, as a Twitch Prime member I got a Unicorn Slayer outfit and nothing takes the horror edge off like the Doom Slayer in a unicorn outfit.

Simply put, Doom Eternal is one of the best first-person shooter campaigns I've played in years. As the second game of its kind it's lost some of its novelty but none of the joy of its intense and furious combat style. This excellent refinement of the already outstanding 2016 reboot makes you an unspoken deal: if you can keep up with it, it will keep up with you. It continually teaches you how to play faster, smarter, and more efficiently, with lots of options at every step of the way to tailor fights to your preferred slaying style, and it's an absolute blast along the way. It is a hellaciously bold step forward from the soft-rebooted series that will satisfy even the stodgiest of old school Doom fans. If you want to rip and tear, there's arguably no better place than Doom Eternal. It also wants to juggle too many balls. There are additions to the combat system, a slew of unlockable items, online multiplayer pitting man against demons, dozens of gun upgrades, a lot more ancient lore, and story connections to older games that offer surprising revelations. Doom Eternal operates on a single maxim: more, more, more. Much of this works, some of it is a harmless annoyance, and a few things are actively frustrating. The frustrating parts don't prevent Doom Eternal from being a great game, but they are there. They show themselves with every tutorial pop-up, cosmetic reward, or late addition to the game's fabulous but increasingly busy combat.

Does it matter if most players are just here for violence and good times, as opposed to all that other stuff? Probably not. Doom Eternal lives by the strength of its shooting, and with a few notable competitors like Titanfall 2, there's nothing that comes close to delivering this level of excitement.

Doom Eternal is set two years after 2016's Doom. Earth has been invaded by demonic legions who have wiped out most of the population. These forces are led by a strange angel-like being called the Khan Maykr and a trio of "Hell Priests'' that are responsible for summoning and empowering the horde. The Doom Slayer, our ever helmeted and mindlessly violent hero, returns to Earth to hunt down the Hell Priests and put an end to the invasion. His quest will take him through multiple dimensions and reveal secrets about the life he lived before he became a legendary warrior. Narratively, Doom Eternal has more going on than what came before. The lines between legend and reality become less blurred, and closely guarded secrets and plots get revealed in the process. Who is the Doom Slayer? What really fuels "argent energy," the seemingly infinite power supply that corporations sought in the previous game, which the Khan Maykr also seems to covet? If you somehow wanted answers to those questions, Doom Eternal's story will deliver them, and it will do so with clumsy confidence.

It's easy to dismiss the Flame Belch as a useless gizmo when you first acquire it. Glory kills make health generation easy and while Doom Eternal is a more difficult game than its predecessor, the early levels are relatively tame. There's not an overwhelming need for armor when you're already incredibly mobile and can rip gargoyles in half for a health-restoring blood shower. As the game progresses, the Flame Belch proves more useful. Enemies grow more aggressive and their compositions hold dangerous elite monsters. Learning to douse minor enemies in flames and blow them into armor-granting bits becomes much more essential. It's a welcome tool, although it does highlight what's bound to be a point of conversation and contention between players: is there too much stuff?

Because, to reiterate, there is a hell of a lot of stuff. In addition to the Flame Belch, players have access to frag and ice grenades that can blow up clusters of enemies or freeze them in place. Each weapon has two different variations that can be unlocked. The Heavy Cannon, a reliable machine gun, can fire miniature missiles or be used as a sort of sniper rifle. The Plasma Rifle can be upgraded with a powerful explosive wave ability or a lock-on microwave beam that blows enemies up when they die. There are runes to discover that unlock permanent powers, like the ability to slow down time when you aim in the air or increase your dash speed. Enemies have weak points on their body that are best handled by specific weapons and firing modes. Is that cacodemon opening their mouth? Better fire a grenade from your modified shotgun. That angelic priest is firing from a distance? You can instantly kill them with a Heavy Cannon precision bolt shot to their skull. Doom Eternal is awash in upgrades, modifications, and options that complicate the combat loop. On the one hand, these options grant players a variety of ways to deal with enemies. The possibility space is wider; you always have something available to deal with a specific threat and you're given carte blanche to employ the tactics you want. This turns combat into a truly expressive experience, even if you'll often find yourself relying on key tactics to deal with specific foes.

9 shotgun shells out of 10 and you can take that straight to the Cacodemon.

Fun Activities To Keep You Busy During The COVID-19 Shelter-In-Place

The effects of the COVID-19 outbreak are causing changes to our everyday lives. The Monitor would like to offer up some ideas to help alleviate the stress that being isolated at home brings. We have compiled a list of activities, games, tours, and videos that you can do alone or as a family. View live feed of animal around the world, take an online exercise class, or even learn to code. The possibilities are endless. We do not endorse any of these specific products, channels, or organizations. There are many more wonderful ideas out there. We encourage you to share them all.

Educational

Rent an E-book from your local library by visiting https://consortiumlibrary.org/ or one of the many free lending programs available online.

Visit PBS and PBS Teaching Materials at pbskids.org for ideas on educating children during their time away from school.

Learn a new skill like coding. Harvard University is offering free online coding classes at online-learning.harvard.edu/subject/programming. MIT's site scratch.mit.edu is a fun coding website for kids too!

With pretty much every subject available, Khan Academy is amazing for these noschool times. khanacademy.org.

Want an educational scavenger hunt you can do in your own backyard? Here is a biodiversity bingo card! Kids can look around their backyard or local green space and try to find enough biodiversity for bingo.

See if you can find...

A plant with a protective adaptation (poison, thorns, tough leaves, etc)	Mammal	Pollinator	A plant that is flowering	Evidence of humans interacting with nature
A plant with seeds, fruits or berries	Animal scat	Spider or spider web	Insect or insect home	Bird
A plant climbing on another plant	A plant growing in the sidewalk/ pavement/rock	GRASSROOTS ECOLOGY	Alaska state flower the Forget-Me-Not	Native plant
Spruce tree	Mushroom	An interesting rock	Ants	Moss or lichen
A plant that smells good	A perennial plant	Plants decomposing (look for fallen leaves)	Predator	A non-native plant

Entertainment

Visit your favorite animals including brown bears at Katmai National Park, bald eagles, or just some puppies. Via live cams around the world at explore.org.

Just because Museums are closed doesn't mean you can't see them. Come take a virtual tour of the Louvre at https://www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne.

You can take many more virtual field trips by visiting weareteachers.com/best-virtual-field-trips/.

Fitness

Find a new favorite at-home fitness routine on Youtube.

Visit Planet Fitness's Facebook page at 4pm for their daily free online class! https://www.facebook.com/planetfitness/

Alaska Club, Body Renew and Alaska Fitness all have online workout available for adults and children. Check them out or try something new like Tai Chi. Now may be the perfect time to incorporate a regular fitness routine into your daily schedule.

Get outside and take a walk, do yoga, go for a jog, or visit one of the many open spaces around Alaska.

Just remember, stay six feet away from people, wash your hands, and don't touch your face!

LET'S GET SOCIAL

L	I	N	K	E	D	I	N	E	N	I	L	R	W	G
H	A	P	P	A	S	T	A	H	W	A	E	Y	E	T
V	K	N	A	B	O	F	A	C	E	B	O	O	K	U
T	S	E	R	E	T	N	I	P	I	T	C	U	A	T
R	L	B	M	U	T	T	F	V	W	I	R	T	H	E
F	L	I	P	B	O	A	R	D	T	D	I	U	S	K
T	O	B	E	B	M	J	I	I	T	D	S	B	D	C
W	M	Y	S	P	A	C	E	D	I	E	N	E	N	O
I	N	E	Z	Y	R	S	N	V	I	R	A	L	A	P
T	S	E	E	R	G	E	D	X	I	S	P	G	H	G
T	G	S	E	T	A	M	S	S	A	L	C	O	A	O
E	O	R	K	U	T	L	T	E	T	I	H	O	T	L
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T	E	Q	Z	O	N	E	R	R	B	M	T	Q	Q	D
O	P	E	N	D	I	A	R	Y	W	E	C	H	A	T

Circle the words from the list below. Place the leftover letters in the spaces for a special message!

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BANG BANG *continued from page 9*

Tour. Iconic songs performed during 'Red Bullet' came from the 'School trilogy' including 'No More Dream' and their 2020 comeback inspired song, 'N.O'. What I find greatly upsetting is my inability to stay up for long periods of time. The final event of night one was 3rd Muster. A Muster is a fan-meet event that BTS hosts to perform special coordinated dances and songs. Rather than being pressured with the stage presence of touring, 3rd Muster gives them a stage where they can have fun and interact with their fans, who are called ARMY, but what can you do about it now that it's past? At least I made it 75% of the way through.

Day 2 was my favorite to say the least. The first concert of Day 2 was a throwback to songs created during the Wings era. I had first heard of BTS during their Wings era through a friend but foolishly I brushed them off as 'another boy group'. I had not avidly listened to the group until their comeback of DNA during the Love Yourself era. Again, my incapability of staying awake for extended amounts of time stopped me not from watching Muster this time but watching the Love Yourself concert in Seoul. I don't drink coffee or take naps but maybe next time I'll consider those methods in order to prepare for an overnight tour.

It brought forward many emotions watching the seven boys grow up again. Despite not becoming an ARMY until DNA era I have just sat back and enjoyed the ride since then. The fandom or group themselves don't bother making people feel bad about joining late anyway. It's never too late to join a group who will teach you to love yourself and others.

LGBTQA+ *continued from page 5*

rudely and wind up hurting someone's feelings.

I'm sure there are people reading this thinking, "this chick is so naïve, and she knows nothing!" And friend, that's okay too. I just haven't witnessed anything like that, and I guess that qualifies me as lucky. You might also be wondering, why is she even writing about this? The answer truly is, is that I accept everyone. And I truly find it hard to believe that a group of people are being hated on so hard that they need to remind everyone all the time to accept them. I also wanted to write about what I thought of the situation and share a suggestion. I think where the gay community should focus their attention at raising awareness is at high schools and stuff. Since that's where a lot of the bad ideas of people manifest. They might even already be doing that. I don't know. Either way, awareness should start earlier than adulthood. Maybe someone from the gay community who has a lot of charisma could research school assemblies that have been successful in the States and contact those people to make stuff like that happen up here in Alaska. Maybe that will help kids have a more accepting upbringing, to have a local role model and whatnot.

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Animal Crossing *continued from page 9*

the perfect birdbath as a housewarming present. It's about living in a world where the biggest concern is whether your apples are going to be ready for picking today or tomorrow. It's about finding a new home.

The shift in New Horizons is that this all takes place on a tropical island instead of in a nondescript wilderness. The setting doesn't have a major impact on the story or gameplay, but tonally, it does add an air of chill to the whole thing.

Tom Nook, the famous Tanooki/mob boss/overlord, starts off your visit to his island with a luau, complete with fruit cocktails in front of a roaring bonfire. Random animal villagers talk about how they needed a break from the world and came here for some peace and quiet. Which ... like, fair.

New Horizons is the first full Animal Crossing game in HD, and the impact is dramatic. These beautiful moments were previously muddied up and obscured by the 240p Nintendo 3DS screen in the otherwise-excellent Animal Crossing: New Leaf. But the boost in resolution isn't just for the atmosphere; it has an impact on the entire game. New Horizons offers a much higher level of detail on even the smallest of critters. It helps the island feel alive. Each creepy centipede leg is visible the moment it pops out from beneath a rock, for better or worse.

The Benevolent Island creator

Despite the jump in visual fidelity, the heart of Animal Crossing hasn't changed. New Horizons is still about waking up each day, making friends with local animal characters, laying out furniture in your home, and donating dinosaur fossils to the nearby museum.

While this is all presented as an experience with no clear objective and a "do-what-you-feel" vibe, there is a main goal in New Horizons: to make the best damn island possible. It's in this implicit challenge that this installment goes above and beyond what past games have offered, letting you create a truly customized habitat for you and your animal friends. New Horizons makes enormous changes to the island construction process, putting me in complete control over every major decision. I decide the location of the housing plot for every new villager, before they even move in. I decide where the museum and the shop will be built. If I don't like where I placed my house initially, I can move it for a modest fee.

New Horizons also frees me up to place furniture items wherever I'd like on the island, whereas furniture could previously only be displayed indoors. Maybe I want to make a beachside zen garden with a flamingo chilling right there in the middle of it? That's my prerogative.

The level of control is thrilling, and that's even before unlocking the much-vaunted "terraforming" feature, a late-game addition that lets me carve out my own rivers, roads, and cliffs to sculpt my island however I want it. It may take a few weeks, but eventually every New Horizons village will be a true representation of the player who created it. You desire to recreate Outset Island from Wind Waker? Do it up my dude!

Making Dreams Come True

The island customization ties in nicely with the other new addition to New Horizons: the ability to make my own furniture and tools. These objects used to be gifted to players by friendly villagers or purchased in a store. But now it's possible to make a bed, or shovel, from scratch, assuming I have the recipe and the proper resources.

New furniture recipes can be purchased in recipe packs or gifted by your animal neighbors simply as a way of saying howdy. Recipes will then require resources (stone, wood, and iron, for example) to create. Thankfully, most of the resource requirements are pretty tame, requiring just a minute or two of walking around while smacking rocks and trees; gathering resources never felt like much of a chore.

The do-it-yourself furniture crafting systems in this game are lovely. They give me a feeling of ownership over the objects I create, letting me customize small details, right down to the design on the bed sheets. I recreated a pixel art design of Waluigi I found online, and suddenly I have a Waluigi bed in the middle of my house. In previous Animal Crossing games, these custom designs were limited to canvases hung on the walls or to specific outfits, but now I can see my creations all throughout the island. Did I cover Taco Bell in images of Garfield? Maybe. You'll never know.

Unfortunately, having to create my own tools lacks that same thrill. Tools constantly break when used, which seems like an outrageous decision in a game filled with so many other quality-of-life improvements. A couple of weeks into my island adventure, I'm still using bug nets and fishing rods that break after 30 uses. It should be mentioned that, yes, I'm still just a few weeks into the game, and it's possible that more durable tools unlock in later months. But there's no telling when, or how, to unlock these upgrades. Until then, I find myself rolling my eyes whenever my shovel pops out of existence.

THE ESCAPE WE NEED

Animal Crossing: New Horizons is a respite from the current state of the world. I find my general anxiety slowly subside as I run through my town, water my plants, and build furniture for the sassy chicken gentleman living down by the beach. It's exactly what I need right now.

There are moments when I look up from a long session and realize that I've been ignoring everything around me. Then I look around at what actually is going on around me and realize that maybe I'd better stay in my island paradise for a little while longer.

I give this game easily 10/10 Froggy Chairs.

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